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ABSTRACT

SYMLOG, a method for capturing group members' perceptions of their interactions, is a useful research methodology which can also be used to teach group competencies. Drawing from social psychology, management, and communication disciplines, researchers using SYMLOG have captured issues of leadership, cohesion, and group processes over time. Using SYMLOG as a central focus in an upper level group communication course introduces students to group research techniques and allows them to use the technique to reveal information about their own interaction in groups. Students are assigned a group task which has a group outcome and group reward and allowed to work on that task in class for a period of weeks. During that time, group members complete ratings about their groups's process. Initial ratings are made by individual members and used as individual feedback. As the group matures, all individual members make ratings and the instructor facilitates group-level feedback so that individual members have access to their own perceptions of group performance as well as group-level data. This creates an opportunity to compare/contrast individual against others' perceptions and sets up an opportunity for healthy dialogue about how the group is going about its business. SYMLOG will also be contrasted to Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) as a technique to inform group members about individual and group performance. (Contains 5 figures and 18 references.) (Author)

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Revitalizing Self-Analytical Groups

in the Group Communication Classroom

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SYMLOG, a method for capturing group members' perceptions of their interactions, is a particularly useful research methodology which can also be used to teach group competencies. Drawing from social psychology, management, and communication disciplines, researchers using SYMLOG have captured issues of leadership, cohesion, and group process over time. Using SYMLOG as a central focus in an upper level group communication course introduces students to group research techniques, and allows them to use the technique to reveal information about their own interaction in groups. Students are assigned a group task which has a group outcome and group reward and allowed to work on that task in class for a period of weeks. During that time, group members complete ratings about their group's process. Initial ratings are made by individual members and used as individual feedback. As the group matures, all individual members make ratings and the instructor facilitates group-level feedback so that individual members have access to their own perceptions of group performance as well as group-level data. This creates an opportunity to contrast/compare individual against others' perceptions and sets up an opportunity for healthy dialogue about how the group is going about its business. SYMLOG will also be contrasted to Interaction Process Analysis (IPA) as a technique to inform group members about individual and group performance.

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Revitalizing Self-Analytical Groups

in the Group Communication Classroom

As fewer doctoral programs in Communication offer dedicated lines to the study of group communication, our community of group scholars needs to address the concern of this panel--how do we unify the research and teaching of small group communication in the classroom. Although a few researchers have become well known for pursuing only group research, far more find their group expertise blending into the more macro environment of organizational communication or the more micro environment of interpersonal communication. This type of integration is not undesirable; however, at a time when universities are more critical of their allocation of resources we must not ignore the future of group communication as a distinct entity and field of study within communication.

Our charge in this panel was to explore how research in group communication had been integrated in to the classroom and to examine the influence of group research on teaching. While many communication instructors use group instructional methods it is likely that many are not maximizing those elements by using what we know about group communication. A second charge of the panel was to examine, in particular, the experiential element of teaching group communication. How does one blend theoretical and experiential learning in the classroom? Does demonstration of effective group behavior in the classroom translate to effective group behavior after students have left the classrooms?

To answer these questions, this paper focuses on a particular blend of theoretical and experiential learning which is also used in conducting group research. This approach focuses on the use of feedback about individual performance as a group member and feedback about a group's performance. While careful construction of group experiences, and individual and group rewards are key elements in group instruction students, central to the integration of research and teaching of group communication is an approach students can understand and use quickly, one that has face validity, and one that provides them with specific data as feedback about their individual and group performance.

From a practical point of view, feedback is critical for developing effective decision-making groups. As Frey (1995) points out, feedback processes provide important information regarding the interaction and performance of a group that can be used to increase both. Giving a group feedback, however, is more

than simply hanging out, informally observing a group, and then telling group members what one thinks. Feedback needs to be done in a more formal and structured manner and students can benefit from learning group research processes which allow them to provide theoretically grounded feedback. This means students must have the opportunity to observe group interaction in a systematic fashion, code the interaction according to some theoretical scheme, and then evaluate the coding within the context of the group's situation. By taking the time and effort to employ a formal feedback process, instructors can guide students to develop valuable insights into the internal dynamics of a group's interaction.

While many formal observational systems for coding communication exist that can be used to provide feedback to a group, this manuscript focuses on two of the most commonly used systems for facilitating group experiences. The first, Interaction Process Analysis, also known by the acronym IPA, was developed by Robert Freed Bales (1950) to illuminate both the task and social-emotional components of group life. From that foundation, Bales and Cohen (1979) later introduced SYMLOG--an acronym for the System for the Multiple Level Observation of Groups. IPA typically relies on the perceptions of individuals outside the group, whereas SYMLOG can be used to capture group members' perceptions of a group's activity. Both feedback processes will help students discover the strengths and weaknesses of group interaction as group members work toward completing a task.

Combining the Elements of Research and Instruction as a Member of a Classroom Group

A critical element of the group communication classroom is to move students from the roles of informal or passive group observer to becoming an active participant and observer of the group's interaction. As a complete participant (Gold, 1958), the student functions fully as a member of a group and naturally observes group interaction. This is the role most students are accustomed to in groups.

A second type of instructional role is the participant-observer (Gold, 1958), whereby a person is a member of a group, but makes it clear to the other members that he or she is also formally observing them. For example, students may assume this role when asked in a small group communication class to participate in a group project and are required to write an individual report about the group using the concepts discussed in class. It is clear to everyone in the group that members simultaneously are

participating and making observations in order to write their reports.

The third role is the observer-participant, in which a an observer "interacts with the participants in the social process but makes no pretense of actually being a participant" (Babbie, 1995, p. 284). This type of role may be used successfully to teach advanced students how to facilitate the interaction of a group. Finally, the role of complete observer is one in which an observer views a group without becoming a part of the group in any way. This role is more synonymous with the role of the researcher. In a small group communication class, for example, students may be asked to observe a real-life group and give a report about it. In some cases, the people in a real-life group are aware of being observed; in other cases, they do not, such as when an observer eavesdrops on a group meeting in a restaurant.

Assuming that group communication instructors want students to learn the skills necessary to provide individual and group feedback for their own group situations, and potentially the groups of others, it becomes imperative that instructors demonstrate how a group's interaction can be observed, coded, and evaluated. This assumption unifies the influence of group research strategies with effective group communication pedagogical techniques.

IPA--INTERACTION PROCESS ANALYSIS

One popular and traditional methodology for coding the function of communication is Interaction Process Analysis (IPA). Littlejohn (1992) describes Bales' theory as a "unified and well-developed theory of small group interaction . . . centered around the idea that people act and react in groups" (p. 301). It emphasizes examining the communicative acts and reactions (interacts) that take place during group interaction.

An act is any message, either verbal or nonverbal, that may be understood by an observer as equivalent to a single simple sentence. "All kinds of behavior--overt skeletal, verbal, gestural, expressive are included, provided that the observer can assign a meaning to the behavior in terms of the categories" (Bales, 1950, p. 7). While IPA primarily is used to code verbal group interaction, it also accounts for "facial expressions, gestures, bodily attitudes, emotional signs, or nonverbal acts of various kinds, either expressive and nonfocal, or more definitely directed toward other people" (Bales, 1950, p. 38).

IPA was one of the first coding schemes to encourage the observer to take the

"role of the generalized other" with regard to the actor at any given moment. That is, the observer tries to think of himself as a generalized group member . . . the observer endeavors to classify the act of the actor according to its instrumental or expressive significance to that other group member. In other words, the observer attempts to put himself in the shoes of the person that actor is acting toward . . . . (Bales, 1950, p. 39)

As such, the coding of acts is done within the context of a group's interaction; acts are not taken out of context, but considered in relationship to the reaction that follows it.

McGrath (1984) honors Bales' work as "the first really effective and extensive attempt to observe group interaction directly, and to do so in terms of systematic observation categories" (p. 140). Communicative acts during group interaction are systematically coded into the twelve categories depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: IPA Coding System

Social Emotion Area: Positive Reactions	1. Shows Solidarity/Seems Friendly: Any act that shows positive feelings toward another person.
	2. Shows Tension Release/Dramatizes: Any act that reduces anxiety that a person or group may be experiencing.
	3. Agrees: Any act that shows acceptance of what another person has said.
Task Area: Attempted Answers	4. Gives Suggestions: Any act that offers direction/action for how to engage the task.
	5. Gives Opinions: Any act that advances a belief or value that is relevant to the task.
	6. Gives Orientation/Information: Any act that reports factual observations or experiences.
Task Area: Questions	7. Asks for Orientation/Information: Any act that requests factual observations or experiences.
	8. Asks for Opinions: Any act that requests a belief or value that is relevant to the task.
	9. Asks for Suggestions: Any act that requests direction/action for how to engage the task.
Social Emotion Area: Negative Reactions	10. Disagrees: Any act that shows rejection of what another person has said.
	11. Shows Tension: Any act that indicates that a person is experiencing anxiety.
	12. Shows Antagonism/Seems Unfriendly: Any act that shows negative feelings toward another person.

At the heart of these categories is a distinction between interaction that is task-oriented, emphasizing goal completion, and interaction that is socio-emotional, emphasizing the interpersonal and group relationships that exist among members. The first three categories are considered to be positive socio-emotional reactions, while the last three categories are negative socio-emotional reactions. The six categories in the middle are task-relevant behavior, divided into answers and questions. Each time a group member speaks, he or she contributes to the task or to the social dimension of the group, but not to both. Fisher and Ellis (1990) point out, however, that "although we may not be seeing both dimensions functioning at the same time, the group process is continuously functioning in both—for the two dimensions remain interdependent and inseparable" (pp. 148-149). Groups thus work on both task and socio-emotional dimensions of group life simultaneously, with the one affecting the other.

Because task and socio-emotional acts represent two distinct dimensions in this system, a group must strive to achieve a balance, or an equilibrium, between the task and social forces inherent in group interaction. Bales maintained that every group has difficulty in adapting to its task environment. In adapting to the task, a group develops social mechanisms to help members differentiate themselves from one another. Unfortunately, as this occurs, the social dimension of the group suffers. In other words, task-oriented interaction creates a deterioration in the group's social structure. Conversely, as group members try to strengthen their interpersonal bonds, the task suffers.

IPA Methodology

The methodology used to code communication acts into categories involves four basic steps. (Each of these steps is explained in detail in the chapter of the forthcoming text identified on the cover page.) The first step is to obtain a sample of group discussion. It is crucial that this be a representative sample; otherwise, the particular interaction selected may not be indicative of the way the group interacts normally. One suggestion is to code a number of group meetings, as opposed to just one. However, since coding every minute of many meetings would be extremely time-consuming, another suggestion is to randomly choose a number of 5-10 minute segments from the various meetings. These procedures will increase the likelihood of obtaining a representative sample of group conversation. IPA can be used to code group discussion as it takes place. However, this is often difficult, especially if there are many group

members and only one or a few observers. Hence, group discussion typically is recorded in some electronic form--videotape or audiotape--and a transcript is prepared. The transcript is then coded and supplemented by viewing the video- or audiotape when needed.

The second step is to bracket off the communicative acts (any meaningful unit that is the equivalent of a single simple sentence), and then code each of the acts into one of the twelve categories. Complex and compound sentences require more than one code; if any part of a complex sentence can stand alone as a meaningful unit, then it is coded as a separate act.

To illustrate how these procedures work, a transcript from an episode of the television series can be used. An episode of Murphy Brown is coded in Figure 2. In this particular episode, the FYI news team is caught up in both personal and professional conflict. The team has been on the road, tempers have flared, and all agree that it is simply no fun to work together any longer. Miles, the executive producer, decides that the team, including himself, needs to reestablish their working relationships and sends the team to a retreat. Not happy at being there, the other FYI team members are still fighting, making it impossible for the group to work together as a team. The thought of losing the final intergroup competition to a group of Canadian bankers, however, pulls them together. The portion of the dialogue in the transcript shows group members' recognition of their problems and the realization that they can win if they work together. Each codable unit is identified within a bracket, followed by a superscript number that corresponds to one of the 12 IPA categories.

It is important to understand that how a communicative act is coded depends on how it is said. There is a big difference, for example, between asking the question, "Why do you believe that?" in a neutral tone (which would be coded as Asks for Opinion), and asking it the challenging way that Murphy does in this episode (which is coded as Disagrees). It is thus very difficult to code a verbal act without its accompanying nonverbal behavior; this is why videotape is preferred, followed by audiotape. For this reason, nonverbal behaviors have been included in parentheses in Figure 2 when they help to clarify the meaning of a verbal statement.

Figure 2: Segment of a Murphy Brown Script

Scene: The men's bunkhouse late at night. The men are sleeping as Murphy and Corky enter.

Murphy: [Guys, are you awake?][7] [We need to talk.][5]

Jim: [Yes . . . oh, what][3]

Murphy: [It's me, Murphy.][6]

Jim: [Oh, Judas Priest, Murphy. (Said angrily)][12] [You know women aren't allowed in the men's bunkhouse.][5] [And who's that with you?][7]

(Murphy turns on light, all the men scream when they see Corky in curlers)

Corky: [Oh, sure you men want us to look beautiful,][5] [but you don't want to know how we get there. (Said in a nasty tone)][12]

Miles: [What are you doing here?][7] [It's after midnight.][6]

Corky: [We can't stand it anymore Miles, (Said in a pleading tone urging the pulling together of the group)][1] [we were just in the ladies room and there was a message written on the mirror in lipstick, it said "Bankers rule."][6] [Will you stop staring at me, Frank?][12]

Frank: [I can't help it, you look like E.T.][5]

Murphy: [This is so humiliating,][5] [we're being whipped by a bunch of Canadian bankers.][5] [So, we were thinking, what if instead of being petty and immature and selfish,][5] [we actually tried to win the survival test tomorrow?][4]

Miles: [All right, I knew you'd come around! (Smiling, and said in a "rah rah" cheerleading manner)][1] [We can be a team again.][1]

Jim: [Yes,][3] [we'll kick their little banker butts up and down the state.][1] [Stay away from Dick, he's mine. (Said as an aside in an antagonistic way)][12]

Frank: [Guys, I hate to be the voice of doom here,][5] [but the survival test is supposed to encompass everything we have learned in the past two days][6] [and we haven't learned anything.][5] [The only way we can win this thing is by, well, by cheating][4] [and we don't want to do that.][4] [I mean we wouldn't want get hold of the survival course map or anything.][4] [That would be wrong.][5]

Murphy: [Why? (Said in a challenging way)][10]

Miles: [Because, that's not why we're here.][5] [We're here to reestablish our working skills.][6] [It's important we do it honestly.][4] [Back me up on this, Jim.][8]

Jim: [I want to cheat! (Said in a harsh tone to Miles, thereby deflating his ego)][12]

Miles: [Oh this is unbelievable.][10] [This is not behavior befitting people of your stature and intelligence.][12]

Murphy: [Miles, the lipstick on the mirror, it was peach colored.][6]

Miles: [Trish. (He grimaces)][11]

Murphy: [She also did a little drawing of you with your pants down, Miles.][6] [You wouldn't be flattered.][5]

Miles: [All of those in favor of cheating say "aye". (Said in cheerleading style to rally people together)][1]
Murphy: [Aye][3]

Jim: [Aye!][3]

Corky: [Aye][3]

Frank: [Aye][3]

Murphy: [All right, (Said in a show of solidarity)][1] [we need a plan.][4]

There is also no one correct coding of the meaning of a communicative act. The best procedure is to have a number of observers first code an episode by themselves. They then come together as a group and share their codings. This is an especially important point of learning for students helping them see that communication can have multiple interpretations (particularly dependent upon whom they identify with in the interaction). Hopefully, there is agreement on at least 70% of the acts. If they have achieved this minimal degree of reliability, they then discuss each disagreement and reach a consensus regarding the meaning of the act. If not, the coders need to be trained more carefully in assigning the IPA categories.

These first two steps must be completed. To continue with the next set of procedures, it is helpful to produce a spreadsheet of the IPA codings which will allow four different levels of analysis. The first is the total percentage of talk performed by each of the individual members. This is obtained by adding up the total number of acts for an individual and dividing it by the total number of acts for all group members. This level of analysis is obviously a gross measure, but it can provide evidence of equality or inequality that may exist within a group.

The second level is the percentage of acts in each of the 12 categories for the entire group. This is obtained by dividing the total number of acts that all group members contributed to a particular category by the total number of acts for the entire group. Level two analysis allows one to see the types of communication that a group is spending time on. This is extremely useful for painting a picture of the group as a whole. By looking at the amount of talk a group spends in the three major areas of positive socio-emotional interaction, task interaction, and negative socio-emotional interaction, an assessment can

be made of the group's general task activity and communication climate.

The third level of analysis is the percentage that each group member contributes to each category relevant to other members' contributions. This is obtained by taking the total number of acts that an individual has in a particular category and dividing it by the total number of group acts in that category. This is helpful for explaining the way in which members of the group are or are not balanced in each of the twelve categories. Level three analysis can thus provide valuable information for understanding the typical roles that members take on in a group.

The fourth level of analysis examines the percentage of talk that each individual demonstrates in each of the categories. This is obtained by dividing each individual's acts within a category by the total number of acts in which he or she engaged throughout the discussion. Comparing an individual's behavior with previously established norms, one gains an understanding of what the person is and is not focusing on in his or her communication behavior. This is very useful information in helping a person to recognize his or her strengths and weaknesses, and attempting to make changes.

Producing graphic representations of these analyses helps students visualize interaction problems that may exist and why interaction processes are or are not effective. The imbalances noted tell a group how it is interacting and identifies possible inhibitors to task completion or decision-making effectiveness. Each of these analyses gives an observer much information to present at a feedback session to group members. Actually having students role play walking through the four levels of analysis in a systematic manner, sharing and interpreting the data with group members is an important lesson in "seeing" interaction problems and presenting the information to the group in such a way as to be of use to the group.

In summary, IPA is an excellent observational tool for learning about group communication because it provides an observer with a systematic procedure for coding the actual communicative behaviors that take place during group interaction. The data it yields are incredibly useful in helping group members understand their behavior at both the individual and the group level, and for suggesting specific areas of change. When used properly, IPA is a powerful way to offer feedback to group members. Its disadvantage is that an audio or video recording must be made of the group's interaction and that a

member of the group cannot participate in the group's interaction and simultaneously make IPA codings.

SYMLOG--SYSTEM FOR THE MULTIPLE LEVEL OBSERVATION OF GROUPS

SYMLOG is an acronym that stands for the Systematic Multiple Level Observation of Groups. A more recent conceptualization of group behavior, SYMLOG was developed by Bales and his associates based on years of group research, including his pioneering work on IPA. Bales developed SYMLOG specifically as a feedback mechanism for groups while observing groups in the social psychology laboratories at Harvard University. Prior to SYMLOG, little attention had been given to delivering feedback to the group so that members could learn about their effectiveness in previous sessions and develop strategies, individually or as a group, for future sessions.

Why Use SYMLOG To Study Group Communication?

SYMLOG is appealing to communication researchers because it captures perceptions about both task and relational issues of the group by examining the verbal and nonverbal messages used by group members. One of the features that makes SYMLOG distinct from other group observational methodologies is that SYMLOG uses the same methodology to capture information about the individual in a group as well as the group as a whole. This provides a common framework for students to compare themselves to other group members as well as identify their contribution to the group's dynamics. Rather than assuming that group context remains constant, SYMLOG acknowledges that the situation impacts group behavior and changes over time. SYMLOG is also appealing to communication researchers because it permits observing a group over time by creating a visual "picture" of the group. SYMLOG's analytical framework is much like a camera in that this analytical scheme provides a constant frame or lens for viewing group interaction. Also like a camera, SYMLOG's lens is sensitive to capturing different images of a group. As a group moves through different stages of task completion, it is unlikely that the SYMLOG "picture" of the group would remain constant, thus giving group members an opportunity to track the development of their group.

Extending the camera metaphor helps students realize the importance of SYMLOG to the study of group behavior. Have students think of one of the groups to which they currently belong. Imagine that every group member has a camera through which he or she can capture an image of the group.

Simultaneously, every group member takes a picture of the group. We would expect that every photo would be different in some way because each group member is viewing the group from his or her unique position within the group. Now, imagine that we could blend the different photos so they represent a collective image of the group. Some photos would be similar to the others, whereas others would be more distinct and unique. Nevertheless, we could combine the photos to make a collage image of the group that probably would make sense to each group member.

SYMLOG is founded on a philosophy which values the subjective experiences of each group member. SYMLOG allows each group member to capture his or her perceptions of a group which, of course, are valid from that individual's perspective. Each group member "sees" the group a bit differently based on his or her role in the group, previous experiences with group members, previous experiences with similar groups, interest in and motivation to be a part of the group, as well as coping with life's ups and downs that affect our ability and willingness to communicate with others on a daily basis. In addition, the methodology also allows us to blend those individual perceptions to create a visual "snapshot" of a group that can be used to provide feedback to group members and focus the discussion and evaluation of their group process. SYMLOG encourages group members to discuss their similarities and differences in perceptions of their relationship to the group and its task activity. While any participant-observational method is subjective, SYMLOG uses that subjectivity to explore why each group member "sees" the group in that particular way. By dealing with these biases, groups often uncover and deal with underlying tensions, and as a result, achieve greater effectiveness. The main concern with participant-observation is to understand one particular group. Thus, this level of subjectivity is acceptable if the main goal is to help students understand their groups better and to help students become more effective in its making decisions.

A common complaint of many working groups is that they rarely receive feedback from their supervisors, leaving them to wonder how well they are performing. SYMLOG offers one solution to this feedback dilemma groups face when they operate in isolation or independently from managers or supervisors. When formal feedback is not available, group members must rely on their own powers of immediate perception to capture how others may be judging their group performance effectiveness. While

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most of us are capable of monitoring our behavior in groups, we have few mechanisms for ascertaining if our own analysis is consistent with the analysis others make of our behavior. SYMLOG allows us to do that. If we rely on verbal feedback from other group members after the meeting, we often receive only simple and global assessments (e.g., "Hey, good group meeting, Bob!"). By structuring the feedback process, SYMLOG paints a specific analysis of a group member's communication effectiveness and his/her role in the group as a interactive whole.

While SYMLOG can also be used by an observer to study a group act-by-act (see Bales & Cohen, 1979), the SYMLOG methodology we will focus on is a coding methodology that allows group members to rate retrospectively their own behavior and the behavior of other group members. In describing SYMLOG, Polley and Stone (1988) use Weick's concept of retrospective sense making as an advantage of the SYMLOG method. They point out that it helps us to make sense of what transpires in our groups. Recognizing that our perceptions drive our overt communication behavior, capturing our perceptions of a group is critical to understanding why we behave as we do in group interactions. SYMLOG helps capture students' perceptions of the group's interaction so they can make changes in how they behave in subsequent sessions of the group.

SYMLOG Theory

Field Theory. The concept of field theory is central to Bales' (1985) conceptualization of groups. Field theory takes into account that group members are not isolated, but rather react to and interact with others in the group situation. Field theory recognizes that behavior is determined by how other group members behave toward an individual and one another and by the situation or environment in which the group interaction takes place. The resulting effect is known as the dynamics of the field. For example, a group member notices that Jeff speaks politely to other members of the group; he appears to have a great concern for treating people with respect and equality. Watching his behavior with other group members, this individual initiates interaction expecting that Jeff will respond similarly to a friendly inquiry. SYMLOG recognizes that individuals make choices about their behavior in groups based on how they interact with one other, and how the group operates within its environment.

The Three SYMLOG Dimensions. Bales and Cohen (1979) contends that a person's interaction in groups is multidimensional as opposed to unidimensional. Bales developed SYMLOG using three dimensions to assess individual and group interaction: (1) dominance--submissiveness, (2) friendly--unfriendly, and (3) instrumentally controlled--emotionally expressive. These dimensions have been shown to be the core dimensions by which we assess our interactions.

The first dimension of dominance--submissiveness addresses power relationships within groups. Dominance is exhibited by group members who act overtly toward others, take the initiative in speaking, speak loudly or rapidly, hold the floor, or address the group as a whole. Nonverbally, the dominant person moves strongly or expansively, keeps very alert and active, and moves firmly. At the other end of the continuum, the submissive person speaks only when asked a direct question, gives only minimal information, and seldom addresses the group as a whole. Nonverbally, the submissive person remains quiet and motionless, draws his or her body inward, or otherwise closes his or her body off to others.

The second dimension of friendly--unfriendly references how positively or negatively a person communicates. Friendly interaction is demonstrated when a group member assumes equality between self and others, asks others for their opinions, and balances talking with listening. Nonverbal friendly interaction is demonstrated when a group member pays attention to others through eye contact, or by turning his or her body to face another group member. Unfriendly interaction occurs when a person demonstrates predictable disagreement, seems detached, isolated, or indifferent, looks away while others are talking, and closes his or her posture by placing arms and legs as if to block communication.

The third dimension of instrumentally controlled--emotionally expressive parallels the distinction between task and relational behavior that is highlighted throughout this book. It can be described by comparing the difference between task-oriented messages versus innovative, creative, and fun-filled messages. Instrumentally controlled interaction occurs when a group member works on the behalf of the group, makes sincere statements of beliefs or assumptions, explores hypotheses before the group, and tries to understand the group problem by communicating opinions and attitudes. Nonverbally, an instrumentally controlled person keeps his or her face and eyes alert, but is often seen as impersonal as all energy is directed toward the task at hand. Emotionally expressive behavior is evidenced when a group

member changes the mood of the interaction suddenly, indicates that the content or the manner of what is going on in the group is too controlled or constricting, or indicates a desire to switch from work to play. Nonverbally, this type of interaction is evidenced by shifting attention away from tasks, or by showing preoccupation with thoughts or feelings unconnected with what is going on in the group.

The three dimensions are viewed as mutually exclusive in that for any one specific interaction, behavior may be described as dominant, or as submissive, but not as both dominant and submissive. Behavior may also be seen as neutral--neither dominant nor submissive. However, within a lengthy group interaction filled with decision making, problem solving, and conflict, group members are likely to communicate in both dominant and submissive ways. At one point during the group discussion, an individual's behavior may be dominant, whereas his or her behavior at another point may be submissive.

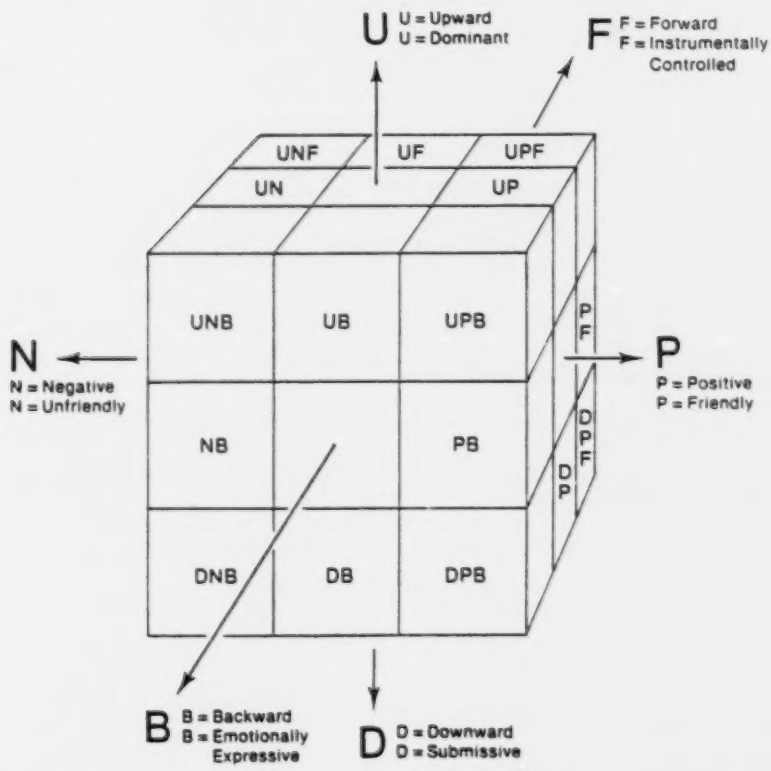
A immediate reaction to the descriptions of these dimensions may be, "I want to be dominant, friendly, and task-oriented in group discussions!" While students might think that one particular type of SYMLOG location would be preferred over all others, Bachman (1988) argues that stereotypical thinking about "good" and "bad" leaders and "effective" and "ineffective" groups is unproductive. Bachman believes that SYMLOG offers a way out of this mind-set. Its three-dimensional system allows us to measure and represent subtle differences in the behavior of groups and individuals. And while SYMLOG theory does suggest that certain leader/group-member configurations are more promising than others for different types of groups (Bales, 1983; Bales & Cohen, 1979), it is focused primarily on relational issues such as polarization and unification--and therefore does not ever prescribe that achieving a given location in SYMLOG space should be the goal of every leader or group member--even when it can be shown that very effective leaders or group members have occupied that space in other groups.

Bales did not intend that any specific placement on a dimension to be seen as inherently good or bad. Rather, the evaluation of one's behavior depends upon other interaction in the group and the environment in which the group operates. For example, formally assuming the role of the devil's advocate may cause group members to perceive one member as dominant, unfriendly, and instrumentally controlled--yet that member still could be seen as a positive force in the group. How one's behavior is evaluated on the three dimensions must be made in relationship to the role played in the group, how the

group perceives the person's role, and the environment in which the group operates, including the type of task confronting the group.

Now, think about the SYMLOG space as being a rectangular snow cube (i.e., like the snow globes with winter scenes). Shake it up, and group members can be anywhere within the SYMLOG space. In Figure 3 demonstrates how the three dimensions combine to create the SYMLOG space. If a group member is dominant, he/she is up (U) in the SYMLOG space. On the other hand, if the group member is submissive, he/she is down (D) in the SYMLOG space. Being friendly is viewed as being positive (P) and in the right half of the space. Alternately, being unfriendly is identified as being negative (N) and in the left half of the space. Finally, if a group member is viewed as instrumentally controlled, he/she would be forward (F) in the space whereas emotionally expressive people are backward (B) in the space.

Figure 3: SYMLOG Three-Dimensional Space



From SYMLOG: A System for the Multiple Level Observation of Groups by Robert F. Bales and Stephen P. Cohen with the assistance of Stephen A. Wiliamson.

The following metaphor is helpful to students. Have students imagine the room they are in as the SYMLOG space and place themselves in the center of the room (forget about gravity!). The ceiling would be where the dominant (U) group members would be gathering while the floor would represent the submissive (D) members. The friendly (P) members would be congregating on the wall to the right while the unfriendly (N) members would be gathering on the wall to the left. Finally, the instrumentally controlled (F) group members would be positioned in front while the emotionally expressive (B) members would be behind center. Without gravity, they would float around the room to occupy where they exist in the group in relationship to one another. That's the SYMLOG space. Theoretically, group members can be located anywhere within this configuration as the cube represents all possible combinations of the three dimensions.

SYMLOG Methodology

While SYMLOG may appear to be a complicated observational procedure, it actually involves six simple steps. The SYMLOG rating methodology is explained in detailed in the text chapter that provided the foundation for this paper, but the basic steps are listed here. The forms necessary to complete the rating and diagramming process can be found in Bales' (1980) Case Study Kit. A review of SYMLOG's reliability and validity is presented in Keyton and Wall (1989).

The first is to complete the Adjective Rating Form. Ratings are created by having individuals rate themselves and others on 26 adjective phrases based upon a stimulus question. A good general question to use is: "How did this person communicate in this group meeting?" It's best to have students assess themselves as an anchor point and then the other group members. Ratings are made by responding to each of the phrases with 0 (never/not often), 1 (sometimes), or 2 (often/always). There are no midpoints between these anchors and students must rate each group member on each adjective. If an adjective rating phrase does not apply, use the 0 (never/not often) score. According to Bales, these phrases represent the most common types of interaction in all types of groups. So, it's likely that some members will be rated as 2s on some phrases and as 0s on other phrases.

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Figure 4: SYMLOG Adjective Rating Phrases

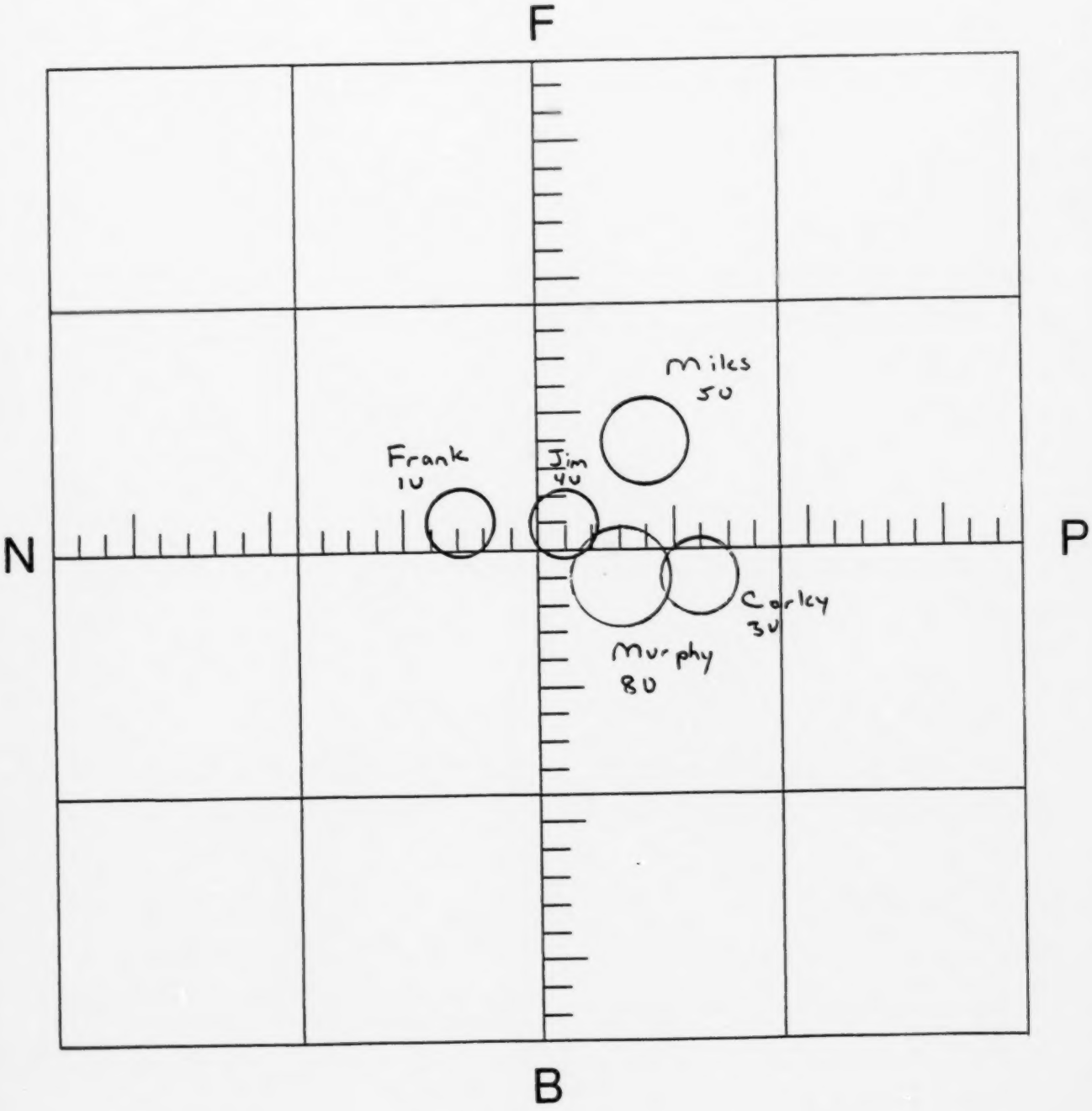
U active, dominant, talks a lot
UP extroverted, outgoing, positive
UPF purposeful, democratic task leader
UF assertie, business-like manager
UNF authoritarian, controlling, disapproving
UN domineering, tough-minded, powerful
UNB provocative, egocentric, shows off
UB jokes around, expressive, dramatic
UPB entertaining, sociable, smiling, warm
P friendly, equalitarian
PF works cooperatively with others
F analytical, task-oriented, problem-solving
NF legalistic, has to be right
N unfriendly, negativistic
NB irritable, cynical, won't cooperate
B shows feelings and emotions
PB affectionate, likable, fun to be with
DP looks up to others, appreciative, trustful
DPF gentle, willing to accept responsibility
DF obedient, works submissively
DNF self-punishing, works too hard
DN depressed, sad resentful, rejecting
DNB alienated, quits, withdraws
DB afraid to try, doubts own ability
DPB quietly happy just to be with others
D passive, introverted, says little

Second, after ratings are made, it is time to compute scores for each member on each dimension. The possible range of scores for each dimension is -18 to +18; however, scores beyond +9 and -9 reflect extreme intensities. Positive scores reflect the dominant (U), friendly (P), and instrumentally controlled (F) vectors, while negative scores reflect the submissive (D), unfriendly (N), and emotionally expressive (B) vectors. This step determines a location within the SYMLOG space for each group member.

Unfortunately (or maybe not), we can't put students in a snow globe. We can, however, have students draw on paper a space that corresponds to the SYMLOG cube. This third step necessitates a somewhat different representation of the SYMLOG space. By plotting locations on the horizontal and vertical axes of the Field Diagram, the PN and FB dimensions can be represented. The UD dimension is represented by drawing a circle around the intersection of the two other dimensions. An example of Murphy's Individual Field Diagram is displayed in Figure 5.

Once plotted, the field diagram represents how a group member perceives him/herself in relationship to how he/she perceived other group members. Because this is an individual field diagram, it captures only one members' perceptions of the group's interaction. According to SYMLOG, however, to understand what led a person to choose certain behaviors or communication strategies during a group's interaction, one must understand his or her unique perceptions. This fourth step lets group members understand the significance of their own ratings. But to analyze the "fit" one group member's SYMLOG location, it must be examined in relation to: (1) others in the group, (2) the group's overall communication climate, and (3) the group's task.

Figure 5: Murphy's Individual Field Diagram



When a SYMLOG location is zero or close to zero, another is needed. Zero scores can signal that an individual is acting in a volatile or ambiguous manner. For example, one way a zero results on a dimension is when the same intensity on both poles of the dimension is reflected. A -1B location results from 4F and 5B ratings. While the -1B location reflects a fairly neutral location on the FB dimension, the ratings indicate that this group member was not neutral on this dimension, but that she exhibited both types of behavior and her scores from the two poles canceled each other out. Other group members might perceive this type of behavior as volatile or ambiguous. On the other hand, a zero may actually reflect neutral behavior, as in the case of a zero resulting when little codable behavior is displayed. It is important to determine whether a zero results from bipolar behavior or a lack of behavior.

The fifth step is when individual field diagrams are used as feedback for group members. When evaluating SYMLOG locations and the level of group member effectiveness, it is particularly helpful to reflect on the field diagram. The questions below will help direct students' reflection on their communication effectiveness:

1. What subjective bias is evidenced in my ratings of myself? Of others?
2. Does this visual depiction fit with the image of the group I have in my head?
3. What pleases or concerns me about the image the diagram projects about the group?
4. Am I happy with my location in the group?

These questions focus on past interaction. Having students answer the following questions can help them in selecting strategies for future group interaction (and thus cycles research practices with teaching):

1. If I'm unhappy with my position, what communication behaviors do I need to exhibit?
2. If I'm happy with my position, how can I maintain or further strengthen that position?
3. Do I have any negative conflicting relationships with other group members? If so, what communication strategies can I use to decrease the conflict?
4. Are there conflicting relationships among other group members? If so, what communication strategies can I use to decrease that tension?
5. Is there adequate leadership evidenced in the group? Can I fulfill all or part of the various leadership functions?

6. Based upon the group's task, will the type of interaction exhibited in the group lead us to effective and personally fulfilling task completion?

In answering these questions about their perceptions of the group's interaction, students must be willing to see the group as a dynamic entity--one that is changeable. They must also see that their own behaviors can become both facilitators and inhibitors of the group's progress.

The final step averages the individual SYMLOG locations to create a Group Average Field Diagram. While analyses of Individual Field Diagrams are insightful, it is limited because they are assessing the group's interaction from one unique perspective. One advantage of SYMLOG is that it allows more sophisticated analysis of the group's interaction because the analysis can be performed from the individual group member's perspective and from a group average perspective. To construct a Group Average Field Diagram, a cube drawing of the three SYMLOG dimensions that represent a group's average positions of the members' perceptions of each other, all group members must rate themselves and every other group member.

While averaging individual locations may weaken extreme idiosyncrasies displayed in the Individual Field Diagrams, the Group Average Field Diagram does give each group member a collective look at him or herself from the perspective of the other group members. However, the Group Average Field Diagram conceals how any particular group member rated another. This level of anonymity generally is appreciated by group members. This type of anonymous feedback could provide a reality check for students because it allows them to examine their perceptions in comparison to those of others. When students know how other group members experience them can be a meaningful step in improving student group members' group skills (Smith & Berg, 1987).

Comparing Individual Field Diagram to the Group Average Field Diagram locations, students should ask themselves the following questions:

1. How much difference is there between my self-perceptions and the group's averaged perception of me?
2. Do I evaluate those differences positively or negatively?
3. Does the Group Average Field Diagram indicate that I am involved in conflicts or tensions in the

group of which I am unaware?

4. Does the Group Average Field Diagram indicate that I'm regarded positively by the group? If not, how can I communicate my desire to change? If so, how I can communicate to maintain my effective position?

The next step in the analysis is to examine the Group Average Field Diagram for information about the group as an interacting whole. The following questions are helpful in this analysis:

1. How do the group members cluster together? Are they diagrammed closely to one another? Are the images spread widely across the field diagram, or are the images separated into two or three distinct clusters?

2. In which quadrant (PF, PB, NB, NF) are most of the group members? While Bales did not intend a priori assumptions about the effectiveness of any particular quadrant, research has demonstrated that the PF quadrant is generally where effective task-oriented groups exist. However, a group in the creative or brainstorming phase of its task might find itself within the PB quadrant, while a group critically assessing the many alternatives before them might themselves in the NF quadrant.

3. Does the Group Average Field Diagram provide a sense of the group's culture or climate?

4. Does the Group Average Field Diagram demonstrate that the leadership function is being fulfilled, or does the group appear leaderless? Usually, group leaders are moderately dominant, friendly, and instrumentally controlled (UPF) (Bales, 1983).

The key in this type of analysis is to look for the "patterns used by groups and their members to discuss, confront, engage, or address" (Smith & Berg, 1987, p. 216). By addressing these issues, SYMLOG provides a generative capacity because it calls into question what we often take for granted about our group process. Instead of glossing over tensions in a group, SYMLOG identifies and visualizes the tensions so that the group can deal with them in a productive way (Stone, 1988).

Using SYMLOG in Student Groups

SYMLOG is at its best as an instructional device when it can be used by all group members as a tool for increasing group effectiveness. Obviously, each group member should independently rate every

other member, including him- or herself, using the SYMLOG adjectives phrases immediately after a group session. Allowing too much time between the interaction and the ratings encourages people to either soften their ratings of extreme behaviors or to intensify their ratings by overemphasizing behaviors (especially negative ones) exhibited in the group. Sometimes group members feel more comfortable removing themselves physically from the group before doing this. Generally it takes about 10-15 minutes to rate five to seven group members. Each group member should also construct his or her own Individual Field Diagram.

Group members do not have to share their diagrams with others. Forcing members to do so inhibits their honest reaction in the coding process. Schneider and Becker-Beck (1988) caution that SYMLOG is "meant to be applied in a democratic spirit" and that "SYMLOG does not try to change the behavior or values of people without their fully informed consent" (p. 126). However, honest reactions to the adjective phrases can help a group to deal with sensitive issues. Groups that decide to use SYMLOG will find that issues which surface must be dealt with if the group is to operate effectively. Keyton (1995) explores more fully the sensitive nature of incorporating feedback about group process into structured group meetings.

The instructor is the best person to compute the Group Average Field Diagram. Members who have worked together for a long time may feel comfortable having the group leader or another group member construct the Group Average Field Diagram. As group members work with SYMLOG and gain trust in their use of the rating tool and with the group feedback process, they are likely to want to regain ownership of the entire process. This is clearly an objective the instructor can work toward if groups can work with SYMLOG over a period of weeks.

Time should be set aside for the group to discuss the feedback generated from SYMLOG. Members can talk about their individual diagrams without showing them to the group or use the Group Average Field Diagram as a basis for their comments. The group analysis should focus on: (1) celebrating group success; (2) identifying group strengths; (3) analyzing why the group was successful and effective; and (4) identifying group weaknesses and strategies for overcoming them.

Feedback sessions are not intended to become blaming sessions. However, if the diagrams

illuminate a problem in a group's interaction, and the group fails to recognize and deal with the problem, the problem will only be exacerbated. It is thus helpful to designate a 15-30 minute period for feedback at the beginning of the each group meeting that provides "the group with an opportunity to suspend problem solving and attention to the task, in order to scrutinize the group process and to discuss needed changes" (Kelly, Kuehn, & McComb, 1990, p. 81). At the end of this period, the group should come to consensus about strategies for this group session and then shift into conducting the group's business. Time should be set aside at the end of the group's meeting for members to rate individually all of the other members so the feedback cycle can be repeated at the next group meeting.

It generally takes two to three feedback sessions for group members to trust the rating tool and the feedback process, and to learn effectively from the insights generated in the feedback period. Groups interested in continuing their group development should consider using SYMLOG and conducting feedback periods every meeting for three to five meetings and then on a more intermittent schedule.

WHEN TO USE IPA OR SYMLOG

IPA and SYMLOG represent different approaches to analyzing group communication and provide different kinds of information to groups regarding their interactional processes and performance. A fair question for a person wanting to select between these two approaches is, "When should I use either IPA or SYMLOG?" To answer this question, one needs to consider what kind of observer and participant role each system adopts and instructional objectives, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the role.

Using IPA as an observation and feedback tool will help students learn the complete observer role. This methodology requires students to act as an outside observer to code ongoing group interaction, an electronic recording of the interaction, or a transcript. The key benefit is the objectivity students can learn to bring to observations and analysis of a group's interaction. Because students are not involved personally in the group's interaction, the observer role allows them to see some things more clearly from a distance. Having the opportunity to be an "outsider" to a group's interaction will sharpen their observational skills. An added benefit of using IPA is that it will heighten students' observational powers when it is time for them to assume the role of a participant-observer.

The key advantage of the SYMLOG observational method, therefore, is that an individual easily can adopt the participant-observer role. This allows all group members to participate, thereby creating an interest on the part of everyone to focus on the group's process in addition to the group's task. It provides insight into the varied perceptions of each group member. Moreover, SYMLOG avoids artificiality and upsetting the natural flow of group interaction by having group members complete their ratings after the meeting. SYMLOG's participant-observational method thus does not interfere with one's own participation and the participation of other group members. There are, however, some drawbacks to using SYMLOG as a participant-observer. Students must take responsibility for their own interaction as well as the effect their interaction has on the group. The observer role should not overtake the group member role.

In summary, IPA is best for coding group interaction and teaching students to:

1. Distinguish between task and socio-emotional communication.
2. Track and follow the talking patterns of group members.
3. Assume a more objective role in evaluating group interaction.

SYMLOG, on the other hand, is best when students are part of the communication process. It is especially helpful in teaching students to:

1. Discover how effectively their group is moving toward its goals.
2. Learn how their individual behavior facilitates or inhibits group goals.
3. Increase their involvement in group process.

Both methods of observing are based upon group theory, which provides a framework for analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of a group's communication. IPA and SYMLOG are thus both effective for teaching students how to:

1. Identify the balance of communication within a group.
2. Identifying strengths and weaknesses of group process.
3. Uncover underlying tensions that have not surfaced overtly in group talk.
4. Discover how to recreate effective communication processes and eliminate ineffective ones.

Bales has developed two rich frameworks for analyzing group process, each with its own particular strengths. Using IPA can help students focus on the nature of a group's interaction, which

group members are exhibiting which communication roles, and the overall communication climate of the group. IPA is also an excellent tool for capturing the imbalances or tensions in the functions of communication in a group setting. Groups that primarily perform only a small number of functions, such as asking questions or providing solutions, will have difficulty effectively reaching their goal. Groups that concentrate on task issues without paying attention to socio-emotional issues are likely to create a negative group climate and de-motivate group members, whereas groups that become stuck on socio-emotional issues and omit task talk are likely to never achieve their goal. Finally, IPA gives students the opportunity to view group process through the eyes of an external observer.

Using SYMLOG as a participant-observer can be a vastly satisfying experience if group members welcome the opportunity and agree to invest time in discussing the group's interactional processes. SYMLOG provides an opportunity to identify the tensions within a group through its visual display of individual member perceptions and the Group Average Field Diagram. SYMLOG identifies the tensions that can exist between dominance and submissiveness, friendly and unfriendly interaction, and task and socio-emotional interaction. Groups that become locked into one type of communicative behavior will not satisfy both the task and relational objectives of the group. Groups that become polarized by exhibiting extreme opposing behaviors will be deadlocked and not able to move forward on its task.

Unifying Research and Teaching in the Small Group Classroom

With respect to unifying research and teaching in the small group classroom, using IPA or SYMLOG creates the opportunity for students to become both researchers in the small group context, facilitators of group interactions, as well as more informed members of groups. Using IPA and SYMLOG in sustained membership groups throughout the semester allows students to track group development as it matures relationally and with respect to tasks presented to it. IPA allows students to examine the effects of different types of talk functions on the effectiveness of the group. SYMLOG allows students to visually see the cohesiveness or conflict generated in and by their group. Both IPA and SYMLOG provide a language for describing and analyzing group experiences.

My experiences have shown that experiential learning is best graded on a pass/fail basis for group projects with individual reflective learning demonstrated in analytical written assignments. Group tasks

are constructed within class. In fact, I actively discourage students from meeting outside of class. Ample classroom time is set aside for these activities. This results in several advantages. One, I can more closely monitor the interactions of the group and provide facilitative help if needed. Two, students can complete analytical assignments on their own without feeling pressure to also meet with their group members in their crowded academic/work/personal life schedules. Analytical assignments can raise sensitive issues best dealt with by students privately or only with the instructor. As a result, students should use their outside class time to reflect more thoroughly on this aspect of leaning about groups rather than using that time to quickly complete a group assignment. Finally, I have found that giving students time in class to work on group projects produces more effective group interaction and better group projects. I want my students to find an effective model for their group interactions to carry forward to their other group experiences. Forcing them to complete projects outside of class time imposes a worse-case scenario and they usually succumb to that pressure. In class group time provides a supportive, facilitative environment.

To create this environment I schedule group courses for a one-day-a-week block of three hours. The first third of the course is devoted to content learning. The middle third of the course is to learning SYMLOG and IPA, and to practicing the methodologies on videotaped interactions and short group experiences. The final third of the course is devoted to their group projects. Group project topics are generated earlier in the semester by students (in one of their group experiences). Students identify their two choices and group member assignments are made on that basis. This procedure eliminates cliques remaining together and produces genuine interest in the group projects.

Teaching IPA and SYMLOG as formal feedback processes and then structuring the learning environment for students to use these on their own group experiences, instructors can guide students to develop valuable insights into the internal dynamics of group interaction that can be carried forward to the many group experiences that await them. Several benefits accrue. One, students have been exposed to group research because they have collected and analyzed the data about their own performance as well as their group's performance. Two, because both IPA and SYMLOG provide a direct theory-method link, students are more likely to appreciate the value of theory and its practical application. Moreover, this

theory-method link is directly related to the experiential learning provided by this type of classroom environment. Three, IPA and SYMLOG methodology is not mathematically cumbersome which serves to introduce research process and practice without intimidating students. The result is that this type of course integrates theory, methodology, and experiential learning within the group communication context and within an environment over which the instructor has control.

Few content courses can make similar claims. Organizational communication fails in that it is relatively cumbersome for a true organizational context to evolve even within classroom settings that use organizational simulations. Interpersonal communication fails in that students (and instructors) are either hesitant (or over eager) to allow their personal situations to be examined publicly. Both of these courses which are most closely tied to the group communication context fail then to provide true experiential learning. Too often, organizational and interpersonal courses become contexts for discussing one particular company's issues or the day-to-day interactions of the most vocal class members. There are few effective ways to bring common experiences into the classroom.

We should be championing the group communication classroom as central to students' understanding of their day-to-day interactions. We live, work, and play in groups. Shouldn't we also be advocating the place of group communication courses in communication curriculums by promoting the theory-method-experiential learning relationships?

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